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ABSTRACT

The Reading is FUNdamental program is funded by the Ford Foundation and sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. Its advisory board is composed of people from diverse fields. It is designed to motivate children to read through experiencing the joy and pride of owning books of their own choice, and its purpose is to help develop and give technical assistance to a variety of model projects throughout the United States. This guide contains suggestions for starting an RIF project based mainly on the experiences of the pilot and model projects. Separate sections deal with the organization, funding, development, evaluation, and new directions of RIF programs. Types of assistance offered by the National RIF Office are outlined. (AW)

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The National Reading Is Fundamental Program (RIF) is funded by the Ford Foundation and is sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution. RIF's National Advisory Board is composed of distinguished men and women from such diverse fields as publishing, education, libraries, government, civil rights, industry, labor, and the arts. The RIF Program is designed to motivate children to read through experiencing the joy and pride of owning books of their own choice.

The pilot project for RIF was begun in Washington, D. C., in 1966. A number of additional projects are now in operation throughout the country not only in urban centers but also in rural areas and on Indian reservations. RIF is an action program to make books a way of life for all of America's children.

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READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

HOW TO DEVELOP A RIF PROGRAM

The National Reading Is Fundamental Program grew out of a pilot project organized in Washington, D. C., in 1966. The purpose of the National Program is to help develop and give technical assistance to a variety of model projects throughout the United States covering urban and rural areas, including varied ethnic groups.

RIF is a program that has given thousands of children and adults access to the wonderful world of books. It has helped provide the pleasures and rewards of reading which should be the birthright of every person in our nation.

These guidelines have been prepared in response to hundreds of requests from local communities and individuals for directions on how to start a RIF project. Based on experiences with model projects now operating, RIF realizes it cannot give specific and precise directions and recommendations. Each community situation tends to be unique–the *need*, *facilities*, *community attitudes*, and *funding potentials vary considerably*. Once the need has been identified, each community has the responsibility for working out creative solutions for organizing, financing and developing its own RIF program.

These guidelines, therefore, are based mainly on the experiences of the pilot and model projects (see "This Book Belongs to Me'") and how they met their varied needs. The record shows that *originality*, *imagination*, and *determination* are essential ingredients for a successful program.

Do not forget a *sense of humor*. Reading should be *fun* as well as fundamental. A happy experience is the key.

ORGANIZATION

I. PLANNING

A. Need

If there are poverty areas in your community where children cannot afford books and do not have easy access to a wide variety of attractive, exciting books, a need for a RIF program exists. To own books of one's own to read and re-read helps stimulate greater interest in reading. The child who does not learn to read in the early grades is handicapped in all future learning. If he does not discover the joy and pleasure of books while he is young, it is likely to escape him forever.

B. Goals

The national goal of RIF is to help make books and reading a natural part of every child's daily experience and to provide the means of ownership for entire communities of good, low-cost reading materials. The initial goals of RIF projects have been first, *to provide ownership of books*, and second, *to permit freedom of choice*. Ownership helps develop a responsibility toward books and foster a joy in reading. The adventure of shopping among books to select just the right one for his own provides a special pleasure to a child, and the act of selection, in itself, can be a valuable learning experience.

C. Target and Scope

The target and scope of the program are dependent first on the audience you plan to reach and second on the size of the program you plan to develop.

1. Target

Most RIF programs have concentrated initially on children in the elementary grades. The public schools have been selected most often as the best available medium for distribution because the greatest number of needy children and reluctant readers can be reached through the schools. Support and cooperation of the superintendent of schools should be sought prior to planning the program. In some instances it may be more feasible to establish contact directly with the principal of a school, especially if the program is going to be small, with a target of only one or two schools.

Some RIF programs have included distributions to teenagers and even adults in the initial phase. In these instances this approach seemed more suitable to the needs of the community. Initial distributions also were made outside the schools—in community centers, churches, recreation areas, housing developments, head-start centers, and public libraries.

2. Scope

The project can be of value only if it is done "in depth". Five books for each child has been considered a satisfactory number to be provided for an effective program. If financing is a limiting factor to the scope of the program, getting the optimum number of books into the hands of fewer children would be the most satisfactory solution.

The scope of RIF programs has ranged from one school with 1,600 children to 61 schools with 41,000 children participating. Programs have also been developed in community centers and churches, especially in rural areas, where not more than 50 to a hundred individuals participated.

II. ORGANIZING

Important elements for organizing an RIF program in your community are: (A) A Sponsor or "Umbrella" Organization, (B) Project Director, (C) Operating Committees.

A. Sponsor or "Umbrella" Organization

The broader and larger the scope of the program, the more important it will be to have an "umbrella" organization tying all the smaller participating groups together. The sponsoring agency generally provides office space and equipment, as well as stenographic and clerical assistance, until the program raises enough funds to become self-supporting in part at least.

RIF projects have operated under a wide variety of types of sponsoring agencies. The pilot project was sponsored by a citizens' organization for better public schools in cooperation with representatives from the PTA's, school volunteers, the Public School Reading Clinic, community councils, the Public Library Board, and the Junior League.

In another program, Project Work (a local organization) acted as the sponsoring agency with other organizations, such as the Business Men's Interracial Committee on Community Affairs, The Salvation Army, Project Peace, and the Public Schools cooperating.

An Indian RIF project in Arizona is sponsored by the Teacher Corps at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. Some of the cooperating agencies are the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State Department of Public Instruction, a bank, and the Navajo and Hopi Tribal Councils.

In yet another program, the local Service League is the sponsor. In West Virginia there was no sponsoring agency available, so the project incorporated, became RIF In West Virginia, Inc., and operates from office space donated by a local church. They received the cooperation of a number of groups in the state such as Parent-Child Centers, the Public Library, the Southwestern Community Action Program, Community Education Associations, Public Schools, and state and local representatives of OEO, VISTA, and the Governor's office.

Another RIF project has a local college and the Urban League as co-sponsors, with the Urban League providing office space, equipment and part-time clerical help.

In still another, a foundation institute and the Area Council, Inc. (an OEO program in this area) are the sponsoring agencies. Cooperating agencies with this program are a regional library, County Public Library, County School System, State Police Department, County Board of Education Resource Center, and the County Extension Service (Agriculture Department).

B. Project Director

A project or program director, preferably a paid one, is a must for operation of a successful project. The pilot project had a paid director and later, when she left, two part-time co-directors were employed. In Arizona the project director is also the director of the Teacher Corps and receives his salary from it. Another project director is also director of the local OEO program and receives his salary from this source. One project is operated entirely on a volunteer basis with a volunteer serving as project director, whereas another project has employed not only a director but also an assistant director.

C. Operating Committees

An *advisory board* or an *executive committee* is important to make policy and generally give direction to the program. The pilot project not only had an Executive Committee but formed four other committees to grapple with major problems: *Fund Raising, Publicity and Public Relations, Book Selection and Ordering,* and *Book Distribution.* Most of the projects formed similar committees or used volunteers to assist project directors with these major problems.

Advisory committees frequently include people from both business and community agencies. One Board of Directors is representative of both its sponsoring agencies, the schools, and the community. In Arizona the advisory board represents a wide cross section of people, including representatives from business, Teacher Corps, the state Senate, public schools, and members of the Navajo and Hopi Tribal Councils. Another project has no organized board.

All of the projects have found that participation of volunteers from *all segments of the community* is an important ingredient for success.

FUNDING

The responsibility for financing local RIF Projects resides with the local community. The projects may be financed with public or private funds depending on the attitudes of both these sources and the availability of funds from them.

Factors to be considered in estimating cost of program:

1. Size of program
   a. Number of children and adults to be served
   b. Number of books to be given to each during first year of operation
2. Salary of a project director
3. Other administrative expenses
4. Cost of a mobile unit

Urban projects tend to be larger than rural ones, but even in an urban environment it is important to set limits to the size of the program. The following are estimates of costs of books based on an average of 2½ books per one dollar. This is for elementary age children. Books for the upper grades and adults tend to be more expensive even in paperback.

500 books for	$ 200
1,500 books for	600
2,500 books for	1,000
10,000 books for	4,000
25,000 books for	10,000
50,000 books for	20,000
125,000 books for	50,000

RIF project director salaries have ranged from $7,000 to $15,000. As has been noted, in one instance a volunteer served as project director and a few have been paid by the sponsoring agency.

An attempt should be made to keep *administrative costs* as low as possible. The sponsoring agencies should donate office space and equipment, stenographic and clerical assistance, and other related services where possible. Attempts should also be made to have public relations skills, stationery, brochures, and other required services and materials donated.

A panel truck to be used as a bookmobile is important for the expansion of the program. Efforts should be made to either budget for one out of funding or to have one donated.

Sources that have been tapped for funds have varied. The pilot project went to two large national foundations and to two smaller ones. The project also submitted its proposal to about 90 small local family foundations, asking each to donate $1,000. Following public announcement of the project on television, radio, and in the newspapers, an appeal for funds was mailed to approximately 1,000 business, professional, labor, civic, and religious organizations. Spontaneous individual donations resulted from newspaper, radio, and T.V. publicity.

Local foundations, large corporations, small businesses, and pledged donations from the community have been tapped most frequently as sources for funding. The alumni of a large state university are supporting one of the smaller projects. Money has also been raised by people in the communities being served through bake sales, fairs, and carnivals. Two of the projects have been financed through the schools with Title I money, but are being operated with volunteers from outside the school system. Another project has been funded with Model City funds.

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM

Getting books into the hands of children should be the *prime objective* of all RIF programs.

I. BOOK SELECTION

A. Cost

Cost is an important factor. Therefore, inexpensive paperback books have been widely used. The cost averages 2½ books per dollar for the elementary child.

B. Pertinent Books

An attempt should be made to provide books that are pertinent and meaningful for children of specific ethnic groups in addition to children's classics and a variety of other materials. A wide range of exciting stories, mysteries, books on science, hobbies, cooking, sports, sewing, poetry, puzzles, and other activities should be made available.

C. Book Guide

RIF has prepared a *Guide to Book Selection* as an introduction to a variety of inexpensive and pertinent books. The *Guide* is an indication of many of the books that are available, not all. This list will be changing, and supplements will be available to indicate new publications, books out of print, and changes in prices and publishers.

D. Graded Reading and Interest Ranges

The graded reading and interest ranges in the book guide are intended only as indicators, since reading ability and interest vary considerably within given grades and different school situations. In the final analysis, the judgment will depend on the book guide user and his familiarity with the audience his program is serving.

II. ORDERING AND DELIVERY OF BOOKS

A. Distributor or Publisher

Books may be ordered through a paperback book distributor or directly from the publisher. RIF projects have used both methods. As a whole, the most effective method seems to have been ordering through a distributor, either a local or a regional one. The projects have worked out their own arrangements with distributors with regard to discount, packaging, storing, and delivery of books. Since the area of book ordering and distribution is often a complicated one, RIF suggests contacting the National Office for further assistance.

B. Prepacks

Ordering books in pre-packs requires selecting a limited number of titles from any one publisher at a given grade range and in special categories. Then anywhere from two to ten or more of each of the selected titles can be ordered to be shipped in one package.
Several publishers offer their own ready-made pre-packs. This facilitates quicker delivery, but is recommended only if the majority of the titles offered are acceptable.

Advantages of Prepacks

1. They provide greater variety of selection.
2. Their grouping by graded levels aids in distributions.
3. Their grouping by category helps to more easily identify books to meet special interests.
4. They simplify billing and record keeping.

C. When to Order

Order as far ahead of time as possible—*at least six to eight weeks*. Delivery of books from publishers can take anywhere from one to three months. Try to anticipate your needs far enough in advance.

D. Delivery of Books

When you are dealing with a book distributor, he will provide delivery facilities as a rule. Many of the projects have acquired panel trucks which they have converted into bookmobiles. These are used both for delivery and distribution purposes. The trucks have usually been donated to the projects either directly or through funding.

III. PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The program will not grow without publicity. It has to be publicized constructively and effectively through newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations; prepared news releases, flyers, and brochures should be used, *giving the who, what, where, when, and how*. Getting the representatives of all the media to a book distribution is essential. The children put the message across. The response of the children has to be seen and heard to be appreciated. Book distributions have to be visited for the full flavor of interest, excitement, and enthusiasm to be experienced.

A documentary film of the D. C. Pilot Project was made in 1968. This film shows the excitement and reality of a book distribution and is available from the National RIF office for use by local groups to help publicize their own programs.

IV. DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS

In the initial phase of a RIF program we believe it is important to make the books available for children to own in order to develop *pride of ownership*. To select a book of his own to take home, to share, to do with as he pleases, creates a whole new experience for the child who has never owned a book before. Distribution points may be in schools, community centers, churches, or from a bookmobile. Although the main objective is to give books to children who have none, no child should be set apart as a recipient of charity. Once a distribution center is selected, every child in it should receive books. There should be no exceptions.

A. In-School Distributions

The project should not impose any additional workload on school personnel. Clearance should be obtained from the superintendent's office to contact school principals to make arrangements for book distributions in their schools. Memoranda should be sent by the school administration to principals advising them of the selection of their schools as participants in the RIF program.

Several distributions should be planned during the school year, with each child selecting one or two books at each distribution until he has received the number of books planned for him. Experience

has demonstrated that at each successive distribution, children have shown greater enthusiasm and more care in their choice of books. Teachers and parents should also be encouraged to select a book.

Volunteers serve as distribution captains and should be assigned to each school participating in the program. The captains may be assisted by other volunteers and parents. They should be encouraged to use their creativity and imagination to make preparations directed toward:

1. Publicizing distributions in advance to build enthusiasm and anticipation of "Reading is Fun Day".
2. Encouraging school personnel to instruct children on how to browse and select books of their own choice and specific interests.
3. Stimulating reading enjoyment and pride of ownership in the children.
4. Involving some parents in distributions to the fullest extent possible. (Some parents may be distribution captains.)

Prior to distribution the captain should be responsible for obtaining enrollment information (important to provide a larger number of books than total school enrollment)–apportionment by grades and general reading level, planning date and method of distributions–by bookmobile or delivery direct to the school, arranging with principal or assigned school liaison person the use of most favorable available space within the school, developing pre-distribution plans (such as assemblies, exhibits, posters, art work, and reading to classes) to stimulate children's interest.

B. Bookmobile Distributions

In some of the projects bookmobile distributions are made at schools, community centers, recreation facilities, community laundromats, churches, housing developments, trading posts on Indian Reservations, and headstart centers.

In one program the bookmobile travels to small isolated communities. The distributions here are related to other community activities in order to reach the entire family. They may be made at town meetings, at fairs, or at some other type of recreational activity. The emphasis in this area is on the family unit.

In some programs the bookmobile is used as a roving library where a child can borrow one book and select one book to keep. Tutoring programs and study clubs have been developed around the books supplied by RIF projects. Adult education classes and reading clubs for senior citizens have also been the recipients of books from RIF projects.

EVALUATING A PROGRAM

The RIF program is difficult to evaluate through scientifically controlled measures. RIF does not claim to make book lovers of all the children involved in RIF programs nor does it claim to improve reading scores. RIF's main objective is to give children who would otherwise not be able to own books the opportunity to experience the pleasure and pride so many of us have experienced through ownership of books. Too often we take for granted that this opportunity is available for all. There are far too many children who not only do not own books but who do not have easy access to them.

Several RIF projects have gathered the following types of material for evaluation:

Parents' questionnaires

Teachers' questionnaires

Principals' questionnaires

Distribution captains' questionnaires

Children's responses at book distributions

From the information made available we believe we can truthfully say:

1. Many thousands of children took great pride in being able to own a book they selected for themselves.
2. The program has stimulated an interest in books and reading in thousands of children who had been indifferent to books.
3. Many children have started home libraries.
4. Many parents have become aware of the availability of attractive, inexpensive books and are encouraging their children's interest in them by purchasing them when they can.
5. Thousands of parents and families are sharing with their children their enjoyment of the books.
6. Many teachers are eager to have similar paperback books for supplementary teaching materials and in classroom libraries to further stimulate independent reading.
7. A number of principals have become interested in purchasing paperback books for their schools.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RIF PROGRAMS

In the initial phase of the RIF program, the main purpose is to sensitize an area in depth with a number of books for every child, the goal being *freedom of choice* and the *joy of ownership*.

The next phase of the program is to encourage the schools, libraries, and community groups to take on the responsibility of making books accessible by the use of public funds (such as Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), stimulating cooperative library programs, inexpensive mobile units, and by raising private funds within the community. This should expand the scope of the program into such areas as community book stores, storefront libraries, and other outlets for the purchase and lending of inexpensive books.

I. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Public schools should be encouraged to use Title I funds to purchase paperback books for classroom libraries, for supplemental reading programs, and for RIF programs in the schools. Model City school programs should also be encouraged to use paperback books for their special programs. RIF has participated with schools in developing such programs and these efforts should be expanded wherever possible.

II. PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries should also be encouraged to expand their use of paperback books and to develop innovative programs oriented toward those who neither own nor have easy access to books. Programs should be developed to move the library out into the community.

The RIF pilot project (Washington, D. C.) operated its own bookmobile in a joint eight-week book-lending program with the public library. The library supplied books and funds toward operating expenses. The two young men who operated the program, one an employee of RIF and the other employed by a local college, established excellent rapport with the people in the community. They were able to convince them that this was their thing and got excellent cooperation. A simple sign-out and check-in system was used. Library cards were not required.

The pilot project also participated in a community oriented program to stimulate use of the public library through an incentive program. For every twelve books a student signed out of the library he was permitted to select a RIF book to keep for his own. At the end of the school year, if he had taken out a minimum of thirty-six books, at his school's awards assembly he received from RIF a packet containing twelve paperback books.

Model City library projects should be encouraged to use a wide variety of paperback books and to develop innovative programs in the areas they will be serving.

III. MATCHING FUND PROGRAMS

One method to encourage the use of private funds for the continuation of RIF programs beyond the initial phase is to develop matching fund programs with a variety of organizations and institutions.

A. **Churches**

The pilot project developed a matching fund program with Church Women United. Over twenty-one churches have been served, and the churches have been encouraged by RIF to use the books more effectively in such programs as pre-school groups, boys clubs, girls clubs, teenage study groups, and Day Care Centers that are housed in the churches.

B. **Reformatories**

RIF distributions have been made at Children's Receiving Homes and at penal centers. The Catholic chaplain at a reformatory matched funds with the RIF pilot project to provide paperback books for the inmates. Many of the departing inmates made contributions toward this fund.

C. **Tutoring Programs**

The pilot project developed a matching fund program with a Pupil Personnel Technician-Aide Title I Team that employed Neighborhood Youth Corps enrollees to help younger pupils in the development of their communication skills and growth in self-confidence and positive self-image.

D. **Hospitals**

The pilot project developed a matching fund program with the Women's Board of Children's Hospital. The books were not only given to the children but were also put in waiting rooms where they were considered expendable. The hospital's volunteer corps was inspired by the books to start a story-reading and story-telling instruction course.

E. **Child Day Care Associations**

The pilot project had a small matching fund program with the local day care association. This was extremely successful and is the kind of program that should be encouraged and aided in all communities.

IV. DEPARTMENTS OF PUBLIC WELFARE

The pilot project has contributed thousands of books to various services of the Public Welfare Department. Social Workers have found they were welcomed as they had never been before when they made their calls bringing paperback books for the children. Unfortunately, the Department has not been able to find funds for books to continue this important function. Institutions such as these should be encouraged and aided to provide the relatively small budgeting for the purchase of paperback books.

V. RECREATION DEPARTMENTS

Recreation centers have been supplied with the kinds of paperback books and materials that have aided in developing programs in their field houses. Recreation Departments should be encouraged to provide budgeting for paperback books and materials for their centers.

HOW NATIONAL RIF CAN HELP

The National RIF office provides information and expertise on running book programs, including such materials as *RIF's Guide to Book Selection*; "Action For Change", an illustrative brochure about RIF; suggested techniques for new development; a film, "Bequest of Wings", which describes the Washington, D. C., pilot project; and an opportunity to observe the program in action.

National RIF is expanding the model projects already established and is helping to develop and serve new projects.

National RIF acts as liaison with cooperating local and national groups, government agencies, publishers, distributors, schools, libraries, professional organizations, community agencies, foundations, and other related programs.

National RIF is committed to:

1. Identifying the pertinent materials which are needed.
2. Encouraging the development of these materials in inexpensive paperback form.
3. Making these books widely accessible to all segments of the population.
4. Working closely with groups in developing appropriate and valid evaluation techniques.

RIF's formula for success will work in any community where the need exists, *and the need exists in every community*. Contact RIF for further information and assistance.

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